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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4215  
INFO RUCNARF/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
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SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, EAP/RSP  
NSC FOR D. WALTON

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: PGOV PREL ID  
SUBJECT: DEATH OF FORMER INDONESIAN PRESIDENT ABDURRAHMAN  
"GUS DUR" WAHID

¶1. (U) The following message is Sensitive but Unclassified.  
Please handle accordingly.

¶2. (SBU) SUMMARY: Indonesia's fourth president and a champion of democracy, diversity and human rights, Abdurrahman "Gus Dur" Wahid died in Jakarta on December 30 at the age of 69. Gus Dur--who had suffered from poor health for years--will be remembered for his role in the reform of Indonesia following the fall of Suharto in 1998 and as the moderate leader of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the world's largest Muslim organization with a membership of upwards of 40 million. President Yudhoyono called for a week of national mourning beginning December 31, the day of the state funeral which will be held in East Java. The Ambassador paid his respects to the family of Gus Dur late on December 30. Para 5 includes suggested language for a condolence message from the Secretary. END SUMMARY.

GUS DUR'S LEGACY

¶3. (SBU) Gus Dur will be remembered both domestically and internationally as a champion of democracy, diversity and human rights. During the first part of his career, he was heavily engaged in NU activities. As leader of NU, the world's largest Muslim organization, he played a key role in modernizing the organization. As a first step, Wahid pushed for NU to withdraw from politics so that it could serve as an honest broker on behalf of its members. He later turned his attention to improving the quality of education at NU-run pesantrens (Islamic boarding schools).

¶4. (SBU) In 1998, Wahid served as an advisor to the moderate Muslim political party, PKB, and ran for president in 1999. After assuming the presidency, he immediately abolished the Ministry of Information, which under Suharto kept a tight rein on the media. Wahid took constructive steps to resolve demands for independence in Aceh and Papua. He pushed for diplomatic relations with Israel. He helped free Indonesian Chinese from prejudice. He also took on the military and demanded that it begin to disengage from many of its business ventures. Gus Dur was a notoriously poor manager and there were allegations of corruption, and in July 2001 the Parliament impeached him.

INDONESIA IN MOURNING

¶5. (U) Wahid's body was flown the morning of December 31 to Jombang, East Java, where he will be buried alongside his father and grandfather. Wahid's family will ceremonially hand over his body to President Yudhoyono at the state funeral. In line with Indonesian tradition, Ambassador Hume paid a condolence call on Wahid's family the night of December 30.

SUGGESTED LANGUAGE FOR CONDOLENCE MESSAGE

¶6. (U) Mission recommends that the Secretary send a condolence message soon. Following is our proposed text for a message to President Yudhoyono:

Begin text:

On behalf of President Obama and the American people, I extend my condolences to President Wahid's family and the Indonesian people.

President Wahid guided his country through the difficult years of Indonesia's democratic transition with wisdom, tolerance and kindness. People around the world will remember him as a champion of democracy, diversity and human rights. His service to his country, and the global community, will continue to inspire us for generations to come.

My sympathies are with you and the Indonesian people.

End text.

HUME